

DEATH AND THE CHRISTIAN

Taught by Willis E. Bishop

My conviction is that the Bible very clearly states that we are a three-part person -- body, soul and spirit. In I Thessalonians 5:23 Paul says, "I pray that your whole body, soul and spirit be preserved blameless at the coming of the Lord." Paul in Hebrews 4:12 writes that the word of God divides between the soul and the spirit. So the body, soul and spirit are three separate parts of us as human beings.

In the experience of death, there is Scripture which teaches us concerning each of those. We know that the body is placed into the ground and awaits the resurrection at the coming of our Lord. But the Scripture tells us that the soul departs. For example, in Genesis 35:18 concerning the birth of Benjamin and the death of Rachel, the Scripture very clearly says, "Her soul departed for she was dying." So the soul leaves the body at the moment of death.

Also the Scripture indicates that the spirit leaves the body at the moment of death. Stephen prays in Acts 7, the last of verse 59, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Or we might remember the Lord on the cross saying to the Father in Luke 23:46, "[To you] I commend My spirit."

By way of summary, the body is put into the ground awaiting the resurrection. The soul and the spirit both depart to be with the Lord at the time of death.

There is no such thing as soul sleep. It is a conscious existence. The body sleeps, but the soul and spirit are very much alive in the presence of the Lord.

On the Mount of Transfiguration both Moses and Elijah appeared in conscious existence and spoke with the Lord.

There is great hope for the Christian. Even through that valley of death we depart to be with the Lord.

There are occasions when the word "soul" refers to the whole person. God breathed into Adam the breath of life and he became a living soul. But do not confuse that with the distinction of body, soul and spirit. In speaking about a car, sometimes the term "wheels" is used. That does not mean the wheels and the car are the same thing. Just so, even though "soul" is sometimes used to refer to the whole person, body, soul and spirit are separate entities of the person.

Question re purgatory.

A. There is no verse of Scripture that teaches such a thing as purgatory. The only purgatory I know is in Hebrews 1: "When He had by Himself purged our sins He sat down at the right hand of God." In the apocryphal books there seems to be a verse or two which indicates a purgatorial existence. But the Scripture teaches that for the Christian it is "absent from the body, present with the Lord."